

We'll Walk Together

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We'll Walk Together

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Summary

Misty knew that she was a strong person, a strong trainer. That was why she was sure she could win this tournament. She wasn't expecting all the other things that happened along the way.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Part One

Breath in. Hold it in. Breath out. Repeat. Don't hesitate. Don't be afraid.

That was the mental mantra of Misty Waterflower as she followed the rapid battle before her. In a massive pool that easily overtook any of the ones that were back in the Cerulean City gym, her Starmie fought viciously with a Lanturn, even though the other Pokémon had the type advantage.

Her heart raced, fingers twitching in anticipation and nervousness. Her throat ached when she swallowed from her loud yelling and screaming. This wasn't just any battle; this was one of the most important battles of her life. This battle would either lead her one step closer to her goal, or she would be forced to train for another full year.

The water practically exploded around them, the crowd ducking back or holding up the umbrellas and rain ponchos that they brought with them. Though it was a warm, sunny day in Lumiose City, everyone who had come to watch the finals of a Water Pokémon Tournament came either prepared to get wet or had ways to prevent it.

Misty leaned forward, sea-green eyes locked onto the swirling water that arced up from the pool. She watched two blurs move within the water spout, and a moment later, Starmie flew through the liquid wall, slamming Lanturn onto one of the stands that floated on the surface of the pool. Starmie jumped backwards, landing on another stand, while Lanturn lost consciousness.

For a moment, the redhead was positive that she forgot how to breathe as the stands exploded with cheers, only snapping out of her shock by the loud announcement that boomed over the stadium's speakers.

"Lanturn is unable to battle. Starmie is the winner of the battle! Misty Waterflower has won the match!"

Misty screamed excitedly, not caring that it physically hurt her to do so. She leaped over the railing of her podium, full-on jumping into the water. The coldness completely consumed her briefly until she surfaced again, laughing as Starmie met her halfway in the pool. She hugged the Pokémon tightly as she laughed.

Her eyes turned up as she looked at the crowd that was cheering for her, a rush of warmth passing through her. Holding onto Starmie to keep her up with one arm, she raised the other to the air, waving at everyone else.

Starmie moved them towards the edge of the pool, where Misty climbed out and called her tired Pokémon back to the Pokéball. She faced the crowd again and waved, before turning and walking towards the young man that she had been fighting moments ago.

He was already waiting at the halfway point, an amused smile spread across his dark face as he held out his hand. "It was a good battle."

"It was an awesome battle!" she replied enthusiastically as she clasped his hand. "Your Pokémon were trained so well! I've never seen someone use Hydro Pump and Aurora Beam at the same time like that before!"

"Yes, well, it was no match for your Gyarados," he replied with a laugh. "Trust me, the best trainer won this time. I'll be watching your next battle. You versus Master Siebold will be something to see. He's not someone to be taken lightly."

Misty's lips tilted up as determination passed over her features. "Neither am I." She waved to the crowd as she turned and made her way towards the changing rooms.

She looked up beyond the stands, to where a private box surrounded by glass stood. Though she couldn't see inside, she knew that it was full of very important people watching her match. Though it was thrilling knowing that Kalos Champion Diantha, along with Water Pokémon Master Siebold were up there, only one person truly mattered to her.

Wondering what he thought about the match, Misty hurried towards the changing rooms, eager to get back to the hotel to watch the battle again to prepare for the biggest battle of her life.

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Champion Diantha Carnet had interacted with her fair share of Pokémon Masters. Most of them were normal people that most wouldn't pick out on a street. Still, there was the preconception that they were supposed to act a certain way, to have this certain air of dignity about them. This was something even more expected with Elites and Champions.

So the fact that *the* Pokémon Master, the strongest trainer within the Pokémon League, was sitting on the edge of his seat through the entire battle, cheering loudly at his girlfriend's victory, was more than a bit amusing to her.

Pokémon Master Ash Ketchum was practically pressed against the glass of the private box, his ever-present Pikachu mimicking his behaviour. Occasionally, he would mutter something he would have done, or tell Pikachu how impressed he was with certain tactics. It was almost as amusing as the battle below was engaging.

It certainly stunned a couple of the more serious Pokémon Masters that were watching. Siebold in particular was eyeing him like he was insane.

When Misty won, Ash whooped loudly, picking up Pikachu and spinning excitedly around.

Watching Ash cheer for the girl, Siebold leaned forward in his seat **slightly** and sighed. "This is the Master now?"

"Be nice," Diantha said with a shake of her head. "He's excited for her. It was a fantastic match, you must admit."

"Yes." The blond man turned his attention to where Misty was hugging her Pokémon in the pool. "I admit, I am impressed. Though I'm not quite sure if she's on my level yet. Not that it would matter."

Ash and Pikachu's small celebration instantly ended, the Pokémon climbed up onto his shoulder as he turned around, his brow furrowing slightly. Pikachu's ears twitched, and the trainer asked, "What's that supposed to mean?"

When first meeting other Pokémon Masters, especially Elites and Champions, Ash tended to get a little bit star-struck, something that made many of these Masters scoff slightly since he was supposed to be above all of them. Siebold was one of these Masters.

He raised an eyebrow at the young man. "I mean no offense to her talent. I'm simply stating that it's not easy to become a Master."

It took every ounce of self-control for Ash to hold back his sarcastic remark, knowing that there were still others watching him. Being enthusiastic and being rude were two different things.

Instead, Ash inhaled sharply. "I know that, and maybe you will beat her, but she *is* good, so it does matter."

"You misunderstand," Siebold assured him. "This isn't about her at all. It's about you. She's your girlfriend. Even if she's not ready to beat me, she will because of you."

"What? What do I..." Ash trailed off, his bright brown eyes suddenly jumping to Diantha and then back in shock. The shock changed to anger and his fingers curled into fists. "Are you implying that you're going to throw the match because Misty's my girlfriend?"

"You wouldn't be the first to demand something like that."

"I hope that hasn't been a recent thing, like after I beat Red recent, because I was damn well clear that nothing like that was allowed to happen anymore. That's just as bad as League Sweepers." Ash had half a mind to stomp his foot on the ground. "Besides, Misty doesn't need me to rig a match for her to win. She can do it on her own."

"Pikapi pi Pikachu pi pika Pikachupi pi." Pikachu pointed out.

The anger vanished from Ash's face as quickly as it had come, and he smiled sheepishly. "Yeah, she would probably kick my ass if I did that too." Pikachu wasn't just being metaphorical either. They both knew that Misty was easily the better fighter and could indeed kick his ass if she ever needed to. Turning his attention back to Siebold, Ash said, "What I want you to do is battle your best, because she's going to be coming at you with her best. Just...battle. A fair fight with no intentions either way."

Diantha hummed a bit at that, a smile once again appearing on her face. Siebold eyed the young Pokémon Master before nodding his head. "I am very glad to hear that. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have another engagement to attend to."

"I think someone else does too," Diantha added, and Ash looked at her with confusion. She chuckled and nodded down to where Misty was slowly making her way to the changing rooms. "Get out of here." Some of the other Masters in the room probably wanted the chance to talk to Ash, but she knew he wanted to run down to Misty. Most of the time, if the Pokémon Master made an appearance at a tournament such as this, it would be in some sort of official capacity, but due to Ash's clear conflict of interest, he made it clear that he was just watching. There was no need to bog him down with politics at the moment.

Ash nodded his head and thanked her, slowly walking towards the door with an air of calm about him. The second the door closed behind him though, Diantha heard him and Pikachu tear down the hall, causing her to chuckle again.

At least he was a lot more amusing than Master Red had been.

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Ash rounded the corner and had to stop his mad dash because of course there were cameras. The second the photographers and journalists spotted him, he was blinded by flashing lights and deafened by questions. It wasn't near as bad as at functions where he was the spotlight, but everyone and their mother knew that Misty Waterflower was his long-time girlfriend, and now she was going to be fighting for the title of Water Pokémon Master. Lots of people wanted an opinion from him.

Despite the fact that he had no official position within the tournament, Cynthia had it grilled into

Ash's mind that he had to be incredibly careful what he said to the media at any given time.

"It was an awesome battle! I was really impressed with both Misty and Dwayne Brycen. The battle could have gone either way." Lowering his voice conspiratorially, he added, "I am a bit biased though. I was rooting for Misty."

One young journalist laughed. "Of course. We expected that. Do you think she can win against Kalos' own Master Siebold?"

"Well, I have faith that she can and I'm going to be rooting for her the whole way. Master Siebold is a very talented trainer though, so it could go either way. Now, if you excuse me, I have a certain someone to go find." Ash caught sight of a security officer that was watching the situation warily. The man nodded his head, and Ash walked quickly by him, holding Pikachu in his arms to make sure no one snatched the Pokémon for an interview (it had happened before).

Ash could deal with the press in small quantities like this, but he still loved the fact that there were always private areas set up where they couldn't go.

Once he was out of sight of the cameras, Ash started jogging again, making his way down to the locker room. He was a bit surprised that he beat Misty, but she was probably outside enjoying the cheers from the crowd. He understood the rush that came with it, and Misty deserved every ounce of praise she got for her victory.

He locked the door behind him so no one would burst in, and Pikachu jumped off of his shoulder, stretching out on a wooden bench. "Pikachu cha pika?"

"Yeah, but we have to deal with more people soon. Everyone's going to want to talk to Misty, and us too." Pikachu sighed dramatically at this. "Come on, you love it, and tomorrow you, the others, and Misty's Pokémon can hang out in the Pokésa all day long."

Pikachu's ears perked up happily at the thought, but then a sly look appeared on his features. "Pikapi pi pipi Pikachupi."

Ash's face turned red. "No!" Pikachu gave him that look that clearly screamed 'I don't believe you and it's the funniest thing ever', which he did not appreciate. "Okay maybe it'd be nice to get some alone time with Mist but that's *not* the reason why I suggested you go with everyone else." He eyed his Pokémon warily. "You're not allowed to hang out with Gary and Leaf anymore." Pikachu just snickered.

The door flew open as Misty finally entered the changing room. She didn't even notice them at first, eagerly grabbing a towel to dry herself off. Pikachu's cry startled her, and she looked up just in time to catch him, the towel falling to the floor. Once her surprise faded, she laughed and hugged the Pokémon close, getting his fur wet in the process. "Were you watching, Pikachu? What did you think? I can't believe I won!"

"Chaa!" Pikachu cooed as he nuzzled his cheek against hers. "Pikachupi cha pika."

"He knew you could do it," Ash translated, though Misty was getting very good at understanding pika-speak.

The Pokémon in question wiggled out of Misty's arms and jumped to the ground. He nudged the young woman towards his trainer playfully.

Misty laughed at the Pokémon and startled Ash by practically throwing herself at him. He staggered a bit, but chuckled and hugged her tightly, not caring that she was still soaked from her

impromptu swim.

Next, Misty tried to kiss him, she really did. The problem was that she was just so excited and giddy that she kept laughing, smiling, and giggling. Ash snorted with amusement after she tried to kiss him twice, unsuccessfully, and shook his head. "Try again later, Giggles."

"Excuse me for being excited." She didn't sound annoyed in the least, tugging on his arm as she looked up at him with wide eyes. "Were you watching?"

"I never took my eyes away! You were amazing!" Ash reached out, running his fingers through her bright orange hair that was getting quite long. He leaned his forehead against hers and stared at her. "No matter what happens tomorrow, no one can argue that you're not one of the best."

Misty's fingers played with the collar of his shirt as she smiled broadly and closed her eyes. They just stood there like that for a moment, before there was a knock on the door.

Scowling a bit that their quiet moment was interrupted, Misty nodded at Pikachu, who leapt up and unlocked the door again.

A rather awkward young man was at the door, a clipboard in his hand. Ash recognized him as one of Diantha's assistants. "I'm—uh—sorry for the interruption. Sincerely sorry. But—uh—the press would like a word?"

Misty took a deep breath, and Ash slid his arm across her shoulders. "You got this."

She closed her eyes, leaning into Ash's side before looking up at him. "After this, we're getting as much food as we can find. I'm starving."

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One definite perk of being the Pokémon Master was the hotel suites. Of course, the whole hotel was an extreme difference from Pokémon Centers and campsites. Even the Pokémon loved it, since there was a spa specific for Pokémon of any size there.

The biggest perk to Ash and Misty, at least at that moment, was that the hotel made arrangements for them to sneak in the back so that no one from the press would bother them.

The young security officer watched them with amusement, used to this after the past few days. Ash looked around conspiratorially before sliding a paper, fast food bag across the desk to him. The man chuckled and accepted the offering, having learned quickly to just roll with it.

Besides, Ash and Misty had way too many bags of fast food for two people as it was. The security guard did a double-take when he saw Pikachu walking behind them with his own bag that he was clutching rather possessively.

The two managed to get to an elevator without being noticed. One elderly couple did get in on another floor, and did a double take, but they were pretty sure that it had more to do with the obscene amount of food rather than who they were (or maybe a combination of the two).

Juggling with bags and making sure that Pikachu was following them, Ash managed to open the door to the suite. They both dumped the bags on the table, and Misty flopped onto the couch. "I'm so tired. And hungry. And sore. And tired."

"You don't say?" Ash raised an eyebrow at her dramatics. He separated the bags, leaving only two behind while picking up the rest. "I can take your Pokémon to the spa too. I'll make sure they all

get their food." Despite the fact that it looked like they were gluttons, they had actually gotten some food for the Pokémon as well.

Rolling over to grab her Pokéballs off of her belt, Misty handed them to Ash. "You're the best."

"Lazy," he laughed before turning to Pikachu. "Come on, buddy. Better leave the princess alone to rest her feet." She stuck her tongue out at him, but Ash just laughed again, holding the door open for Pikachu.

Misty watched the door close, and rolled over onto her stomach, burying her face into the cushion and screaming loudly. She giggled wildly, so pleased with her Pokémon and herself. Even if she didn't defeat Master Siebold tomorrow, that was still okay. Oh, she'd be sad, but she'd be ready for next year in that case.

She moved her head and eyed her food, her stomach grumbling. She decided to wait for Ash to eat though, instead turning to her cellphone, turning it on for the first time that day. Instantly, it was filled with messages and notifications of missed calls. She tapped her sister's name on the screen, and pressed it against her ear.

Realizing her error of the time difference, Misty quickly hauled the phone away to hang up, but was cut off as the call was answered. Instead of being annoyed, Daisy's excited shriek echoed from the phone. "Misty! How are you? I watched the battle and it was epic!"

Misty jumped a little bit, and hit the speaker button (even if she really didn't have to). "Thanks. I was just about to hang up because the time difference. What are you doing awake?"

"Feeding the baby," she answered simply enough. "They do tend to wake up quite a bit. You'll understand someday."

Misty rolled her eyes. All of her sisters were saying that to her like they all shared some massive secret that she couldn't comprehend. She was sure that it was sleep deprivation talking. "Sure."

Daisy snorted at her answer, though it was the most lady-like snort that she had ever heard. "So, are you ready for tomorrow? You might become a Water Pokémon Master!"

"I..." Misty trailed off, shoulders slumping slightly, though she knew that Daisy couldn't see it.

"Mist?"

"I'm nervous!" she blurted out. "I just...I know that I can do it again next year if I don't win. No one will think less of me, but..."

"You'll think less of yourself for a bit," Daisy figured. "I guess it doesn't help that your boyfriend is the Pokémon Master."

"That's more of a media thing," Misty insisted. It really wasn't though. People expected *her* to be a badass trainer because he was one. It was true that she was, but it was by her own merits, not his.

"You'll do fine," her older sister said, and Misty could hear little Dylan Sketchit whine a bit in the background.

A small smile appeared on her face. "How is he doing?" She had been training so hard, that Misty didn't really get to see her youngest nephew much. Not nearly as much as she had **Kenn** or Dover, Violet and Lily's sons.

"He cries all the time." Daisy suddenly sounded exasperated. "And poops. And smells. And doesn't do much else aside from that. But he's adorable! He is already such a photogenic baby. Way more than Kenn and Dover. Don't get me wrong, they're both adorable, but not like this."

Oddly enough, Misty had heard the same thing from Lily after Dover had been born the year before. "Of course."

"I love my son. I do. But like...a baby kind of sucks your sex-life dry because when it's not crying you just...want to sleep."

Misty's head dropped onto the bed and she shook her head. "Oh my Arceus...that's your big complaint?"

"I mean, I've finally been cleared to go but I'm just so tired and Tracey's so tired!"

"What a pity."

"You don't understand! You're in a fancy hotel in Lumiose City with your hot boyfriend with no screaming kids at all you can do whatever you want, whenever you want!" Daisy paused. "I'm just going to have to live vicariously through you, so give me the scandalous deets."

Misty snorted with amusement. "You caught us. It's *so* scandalous." She lowered her voice as if telling a secret. "Let me tell you, all the really long, exhaustion sessions of studying battle strategies, pigging out on food, watching movies and falling asleep early...if people only knew."

Daisy laughed. "You two bring shame to young adults everywhere." She yawned. "Well, he's finally asleep, so I think I'm going to try and get a few hours. Congrats on the win, Mist. I know you'll do awesome tomorrow. Oh!" Misty almost jumped at the sudden exclamation that was so much louder than what came before it. "Do me a favour! Lily uploaded some more pictures from her wedding to Pokébook and said that they're better than mine so can you like...compare them and tell her she's wrong? Thanks, love you. Bye!"

Misty blinked and stared down at her phone, shaking her head. She went through all of the other messages, smiling warmly at the congratulations and encouragement for tomorrow. She'd text them all back tomorrow at a more decent hour. Except for Serena, of course. She responded to that instantly.

Her eyes turned towards the door as the lock clicked and Ash walked in. The smile that had been on her lips dropped into a frown. Ash had his phone to his ear, his eyebrows pinched together. "—Okay, so what do you want to do now?" He nodded at Misty and held up his finger to tell her that he'd only be on the phone for another minute. "No, that's okay. Yeah I mean, it's only one extra day, right? We schedule these things in case something like this happens. Okay. Yeah. Sounds good. Have a good night, Diantha." He hung up the phone and groaned. For a moment, he looked like he was about to throw himself onto the bed, but instead he went over, grabbed their bags of food, set them down on the coffee table in front of the couch, and grabbed his laptop.

"What's up?" Misty asked, pulling her bag towards her as she sat up. No doubt Ash's fries would be a little limp by now, but her salad was just fine.

"You broke the pool," he said dryly, his tone annoyed but his expression amused as he sat beside her.

Misty paused in pulling out her food and stared at him, brow furrowing. "What do you mean I broke the pool?"

"I mean your battle today was so intense that the lining of the pool is ruined and it started to leak. They're repairing it, but it won't be ready for tomorrow. Gotta postpone for a day."

"What?" Misty gaped at him in horror.

"Hey, hey, the food!" Ash exclaimed and caught her salad that nearly dropped from her hands onto the floor. It might have been an overreaction, but he knew how cranky she could get when she was hungry.

"It's postponed? What does that mean? I know what it means, but what's going to happen?" Misty grabbed a hold of his arm, shaking it gently.

"Calm down. It just means that you have a day to relax tomorrow. Think about it, it's another day for your Pokémon to recharge at the spa, right?"

"I guess," Misty agreed, her stomach twisting a bit. She was going to think about the battle all day tomorrow, and it was going to turn her into a nervous wreck. Suddenly, her food didn't look very appealing.

As if sensing her thoughts, Ash resting a hand on top of her head. "Hey, we can always go visit Serena tomorrow, right? Clemont and Bonnie too. We'll just have a day of fun so you're not worrying."

"That...would be nice," she admitted, scooting a bit closer to him. She watched as he brought up some official-looking form on the computer. "What are you doing?"

"Making sure the notification about extra funds they're using to fix the pool gets to Goodshow," he explained, narrowing his eyes a bit at the screen. "And putting it into the systems that your battle date is changing."

Misty watched with interest. Though Ash wasn't involved with the tournament itself, he was the one that initially had to decide when each type-specific tournament would take place, and where. Cities and towns from the different Regions applied, and he picked from those. She remembered how stressed he was planning all of this out at first, though Red *had* helped him. Ash didn't care for his father, but he could appreciate his help professionally with some things.

By the time Ash was done filling things out, and answering different emails, Misty was done with her food. He started picking at his now cold fries as she stood up and stretched. "I'm going to get a shower. The chlorine in that pool is making my hair feel gross." They clearly didn't use the stuff that Cerulean City did.

Ash hummed in agreement, and she went to go collect her clothes to change in the bathroom. As she passed by him again, he said, "Hey Mist, did you want to go out somewhere to celebrate winning or something? We don't have to stay here if you don't want to." He was glancing at his phone, and seemed honestly concerned about something.

Misty leaned closer and saw Daisy's name on the screen. She rolled her eyes. "No way. I'd much rather just watch a movie and sleep. We can do things tomorrow now, right?"

"If that's what you want." He still sounded unsure.

Misty kissed his cheek quickly. "You know that if I was bored, I'd tell you." She ran her fingers through his hair and then made her way out of the room. She needed a long, quiet, warm shower for now.

By the time she was done and in her shorts and tank top, Ash had eaten, changed into his pajama pants and a t-shirt, and was flipping through the television channels, looking quite confused about most of the shows.

Rubbing her hair dry with a towel, Misty used her free hand to dig through her bag to get a brush. Once she found it, she untangled her wet hair and looked at it with narrow eyes. "Do you think I need to cut my hair?"

"Hmm?" Ash looked over at her. He eyed the orange locks. "I mean, if you want to. It looks awesome long and short."

She rolled her eyes at him and raised an eyebrow. "That's a smart answer, and sweet of you, but be honest."

"In the middle?" he asked, reached forward as she sat beside him, pushing her hair in just above her shoulders. "You can put it up or leave it down then, right?"

"Since when are you practical?" Misty's sea-green eyes flashed with amusement as she plugged in her phone to charge, and fished out her tablet. She needed to check on the photos Daisy asked her about earlier, knowing her sister would hound her until she did.

They were both quiet but very content, doing their own things for a few minutes. Misty broke the silence when she scoffed and shook her head.

"What?"

"Daisy and Lily are being competitive about their wedding photos again," she said while rolling her eyes. "I swear, it's like Pokébook is their lives or something. I swear they post everything on it."

"I don't get it," Ash said with a frown. "I mean, I can't even post a picture of a muffin online without someone flipping out, so why everything personal?" No one had warned him about that beforehand. So many people flocked to his social media, especially once it was revealed that it was actually him, not a media liaison or something like that, handling it, it was actually ridiculous. He was pretty sure that, given his position of power and the people that followed him, he could probably take over the world just by asking. Giovanni had nothing on him.

Misty laughed. "Remember that time we put a selfie of us in our new house and it actually ended up on a gossip blog." Of course, the fact that the unmarried Pokémon Master and his girlfriend had moved in together had been big gossip news anyway, especially amongst the little old ladies of Pallet Town.

"People are crazy," Ash said, and suddenly looked at her again. "When you were in the shower I got an email from Flint. From Sinnoh. Elite Four. Anyway, he just sent me this really long email and I'm pretty sure it comes down to him wanting money to put flamethrowers in his arena. The money isn't really up to me, I put requests in to Goodshow, but Cynthia is in charge of that type of thing for her Elites. But apparently she said no, so now he's asking me."

Misty laughed at that. "Because flamethrowers aren't threatening to challengers. What did you tell him?"

"I said no and copied Cynthia into the email." Maybe Ash needed to work on his tact a little more, but he got the message across very simply. "Why did I think that this job was mostly going to be battling and working with Pokémon?"

"You do that too," she reminded him, patting his knee. "You'll get used to all this stuff eventually."

It hasn't been that long. As long as you don't post your entire life online, I'm sure you'll be fine."

Ash's shoulders relaxed slightly. She was right, of course. He was rather new at this, to the point where everything he did was still monitored by Red as a mentor. Ash thought he was a shitty father and a bad leader, but he actually *did* appreciate not being on his own at first.

Shrugging off those thoughts, he looked up at his girlfriend to ask a question, but it died on his lips when he saw her glaring at the tablet, her lips tilted up in a rather adorable pout. She was still clearly annoyed though. "What's wrong?"

"Hmm?" Misty looked up at him, a bit startled. A small smile spread across her lips. "Nothing. It's no big deal."

Ash groaned. "That just means 'Ash this is a huge deal and if you don't figure it out I'm going to throw you out the window'. You know it's true." He motioned towards the balcony that was attached to their room.

Misty laughed and playfully stood up. "Better guess or out the window you go."

"...You're still hungry?"

She dramatically sighed and made her way towards the window, tugging him out of the bed with her. "Out the window you go."

Ash laughed and tugged her back to him. "Seriously, what's up?"

"There's something wrong," she assured him. "I was just thinking about a lot of things lately and looking at my sisters pictures...and well...it just reminded me how ridiculous their weddings were. Like...I keep getting flashbacks to how...atrocious both of them were."

Whatever Ash had been expecting, it certainly wasn't that. He snorted with amusement. "You went on and on about how nice everything was at both of their weddings." He quirked an eyebrow at her and made his voice higher. "Look at how pretty my dress is, Ash! I can't believe I actually look nice with this hair! Aren't those flowers fabulous?"

"I do not sound like that!" Misty laughed and tossed a pillow at him. "I was excited for them. And I was kind of just amazed that it didn't look Arceus-awful, but really, they were like a circus or one of Serena's performances! It was ridiculous. And you know that when Vi and Brad get married that theirs will be even worse! If it ever happens." She held up the tablet and brought up a few perfectly staged pictures. Ash was in a lot of the ones from Tracey and Daisy's wedding, since he had been Best Man while she was Maid of Honour. She had only been a Bridesmaid for Lily, and Ash had only watched.

He distinctly remembered that, since their weddings were so close together the two sisters had been competitive. It wasn't said, but they all knew that Lily's was pulled together quickly because she had a young son and didn't want the stigma that came with being unmarried. Daisy, on the other hand, had been planning hers for a long time.

Ash remembered Tracey trying to rein Daisy in with little success. It had been pure madness. Though everything went off without a hitch, it was still a bit traumatizing for Ash to think about.

With that in mind, he completely understood what Misty was suddenly getting at. "Let's hope Violet doesn't get married. That's a pretty common trend in Pokémon Studios right now, right?"

Misty pressed her lips together, and Ash felt her emotions shift with his Aura. He didn't say

anything, but he could tell that there was something else bothering her, not just the memories. "That's...not it though...is it? What's bothering you?"

Misty regarded him carefully for a moment before turning to look out the window. "I was just thinking...I don't want something like that." Ash blinked with surprise. "I don't want a big show. I mean, I always thought I did when I was younger. I thought that a wedding had to be traditional and massive with hundreds of people and dozens of roses and family that you wish wasn't there because you hate them but they're still there because it's a wedding. I realized years ago that I didn't want that and thought, hey, maybe something by the ocean would be nice but after Lily and Daisy's and seeing all these reminders it just makes me think..." She trailed off and shrugged. "I don't want any of it."

Ash didn't really know how to process that. He could distinctly remember when Misty was in her 'romantic' stage, because they were young and he thought she was utterly ridiculous, but he couldn't pinpoint a time when that train of thought evolved into something else. In retrospect, he realized that it definitely did happen, or she would have shrugged him off a long time ago. He wasn't exactly the most romantic person in the world (or at all). This surprised him a bit though.

"What *do* you want then?" He tilted his head slightly as he stared at her.

"It's stupid," she preluded. "Really stupid. It's okay to laugh about it. I've just been thinking lately how...romantic it would be to run off and elope somewhere." She sighed as she looked at the twinkling lights that lit Lumiose City now that the sun's rays had vanished. Despite talking to Ash, she let herself go to a faraway place. "If I had to choose a place, it'd be right here in Lumiose. It's perfect. There doesn't have to be big fancy dresses or parades of people and a big party afterwards. Just you and me. That's all I really want now."

She didn't hesitate in bringing up that she was referring to them. It was something that they had talked about in an off-handed way before, using small comments about 'when' they got married, not if. That happened just like the occasional time that someone would make an off-handed comment about how many kids they wanted. It was never a serious sit-down conversation. Most people expected it to happen anyway, including both of them. They had been dating for years and lived together already.

Ash studied her, taking in the familiar features of her face. He could feel the genuine honesty in her words, that it was really what she wanted. He was thoughtful as his eyes slid to look out the window, his brow furrowing. Lumiose was the perfect place in her mind.

The comfortable silence enveloped them for several moments, as he swallowed, a tiny bit nervously. "Let's do it then."

"Huh?" Misty looked up at him, startled by his sudden words. She thought about what he said, her eyes going wide. "What?"

"Yeah. Right now. Well...no. Not *right now*, but tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow?"

"Yeah. You don't have your battle 'til the next day and we were just going to catch up with Clemont, Serena and Bonnie anyway. So let's go do that instead."

Misty opened and closed her mouth a couple times before stuttering, "I—I didn't bring it up to you to get to—you know—I wasn't trying to say—"

"I know," Ash interrupted her with a shrug of his shoulders. "I was going to ask you soon anyway. You know, after you became a Water Master."

Misty stared at him, and Ash could feel her emotions twisting in about ten different ways at once, it was a little hard to look at. "You were not."

Ash blinked. "Yeah, I was."

Misty smiled. "No, you weren't. And that's okay Ash—I don't want you to."

"But I was."

"You weren't."

"Was too." There was a bit of annoyance creeping into his tone.

"Was not." Misty sounded a bit miffed too.

"Was too!" Ash stormed over to the bed, the desire to prove himself right rushing through him. Misty jumped and watched with wide eyes as he flung himself across the bed, not caring that he knocked the remote and his phone to the floor. He dug through the bag that was on the opposite side for a moment and let out a triumphant yell when he found what he was looking for. Twisting around, he tossed a small, velvet box at her, smiling smugly the entire time.

Misty caught it easily, staring at the white box with wide eyes. Her heart thudded painfully in her chest and she took a deep breath, expecting to see a ring pop or something from a vending machine as she opened it.

She gasped and almost dropped the box as she forgot how to breathe. It definitely wasn't out of a vending machine. At first she thought it was a simple white-gold band with a diamond in the center but as the light glinted off of it, she realized that the sides had an iridescent look to them. She recognized it as shells that were made specifically to go in rings. They sold these in Cerulean City and Ash hadn't been there in at least a month. He was carrying this around on him for at least that long.

He wasn't lying. He had been intending to ask her before she brought it up.

Misty blinked back tears as she looked up at his smug face. She tried to say something heartfelt and sweet, but all she could say was, "Did you just propose by arguing and throwing the ring at me?"

"Yup." He sounded quite pleased with himself.

A laugh bubbled up. "You idiot." She stormed towards him and tossed herself on his lap. She took a deep breath as she nuzzled her face into the crook of his neck. "Ask me again. Without throwing it at me."

"Huh?"

"Ask me again," Misty said forcefully, shoving the box in his hands. "Right here, right now."

She didn't move off of his lap, so Ash took that as his cue that he didn't have to get down on a knee. Despite that, and the fact that he had already asked her in his own way, he suddenly felt nervous. The palms of his hands felt sweaty and his heart beat painfully in his chest. He hadn't actually said the words, had he?

Ash took a deep breath and tried to clear his mind. Overthinking would be the end of him and it never worked out well. Jumping was what he did best. "Will you marry me?"

Misty all but snatched the box back from his hand, nodding her head. She didn't look up, but Ash could feel her smile against his skin. She put the ring on her finger and held it out in front of her, admiring it with a wide smile.

Ash smiled broadly in response, wrapping his arms around her as he nuzzled his face against her damp hair. "I was serious, you know. You want to just run off and get married? We're already here. There'd be no way we could get away with just having a small one. It'd be a circus." Misty shifted to look back at him. Ash loosened his grip to let her move until they could see one another clearly. "I..." He suddenly felt embarrassed, his cheeks becoming warm. "I don't need some big ridiculous thing. I don't have anything to prove. You know I love you and I don't care what they think. Just you. So that's all I need there."

Misty inhaled sharply and she wasn't able to keep her happy, overwhelmed tears in. She laughed as he put a hand on her cheek, understanding that he was concerned over her tears. She put her hand over his, the one with the ring on it, and said, "I can get a dress tomorrow morning. Off the rack." There was no possible way to get a customized one but that was okay. She'd go in a second-hand, cheap one if need be.

"Serena could help," he suggested. "She's interning in a place that does that kind of thing, right?"

"She could!" Excitement bubbled up in Misty's voice. "Oh! And she and Clemont could be witnesses! Most places have witnesses anyway, but we can have two of our own!" Her smile dropped off of her face so quickly that it actually alarmed him. "But...your mom. And Dawn too."

Ash faltered a bit. There was absolutely no way that his mother could make it in time before tomorrow. Dawn, his half-sister, would surely murder him for getting married without her there to make a big deal out of it. She had actually told him once not to run off and do it without her there, like she had known back then. Then Ash thought about his earlier words and his resolve came back. He wasn't lying when he said all that he needed was Misty. Her put his hands on either side of her face. "I don't care. We'll...we'll get Bonnie to film it!"

Misty's eyes lit up, both at the sureness of his voice and the suggestion. "Yeah! Oh, your suit is clean, right? And we'll need rings for both of us. And to find a place."

"Hey, I can feel you starting to stress! Don't do that! You get a dress and what you need to get. I'll take Clemont with me and find a place. He knows Lumiose much better. We can get cheap rings and then we'll go and pick out nicer ones later on when we have more time. My suit's fine. It'll be okay. We'll do it all tomorrow. And then the next day you'll win your battle."

Misty felt warmth erupt in her chest. Right now, she was just Misty Waterflower, former Cerulean City Gym Leader. If she won though, in two days' time she would be Water Pokémon Master Misty Waterflower. No, she thought, she'd be Water Pokémon Master Misty Ketchum.

Misty tugged him as close to her as she possibly could, kissing him with everything she had, knowing that he'd feel the emotions running through her. She couldn't use Aura the way he could, but she could still feel love, confidence and excitement coming from him as Ash returned the kiss.

Right then and there, that was really all she needed.

Part Two

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Misty groaned at the sound of the alarm blaring, very unwilling to leave the comfortable confines of the soft blankets. She grumbled unhappily as she felt movement beside her as Ash leaned over her to turn off the annoying sound. He then flopped back down, draping an arm around her and pulling her close. He rested his forehead against the bare skin of her shoulder, and Misty shifted a bit to get more comfortable.

"We gotta get up," Ash mumbled into her shoulder.

"Nah." She rolled over and nestled herself close to him. "We can just lay here all day."

He snorted lightly. "You sure?"

Misty blinked open her eyes, wondering why he sounded so amused and wasn't agreeing with her that sleep was an amazing thing. Her hand rose up to wipe the gunk from the corner of her eyes, when she felt something metallic touch the skin of her face. Her eyes snapped towards her hand, and she stared at the glittering ring with confusion.

Then the memories rushed back and a small scream escaped her lips. Ash started beside her, sitting up abruptly and stared down at her with wide eyes. "Uhh?"

She couldn't keep her grin off of her face as she threw herself on top of him and kissed him, lips lingering as she enjoyed the feel of his bare skin against her own. She grinned as she curled up close to him. "We're getting married today."

"You sure? You didn't seem like you wanted to a few minutes ago." Ash laughed as she smacked his chest lightly.

"You're right though, we have to get up. There's so much to do." She yawned and stretched out her limbs.

Ash eyed her, a soft smile on his face. "You sure you want to do this? I won't be mad if you say no and wanna wait." He reached out, trying to run a hand through her hair, when his fingers got stuck in the messy tangles.

"Ow!" Misty swatted at his hands, and then ran her own fingers through the knots. Surely it looked like a Sparrow's nest. She gave up on it quickly, not caring how messy her hair was at the moment. Instead, she focused on Ash and frowned. "You don't want to?"

"What? No! Of course I want to!" Ash's eyes went wide. "I told you last night." He leaned forward, pressing his forehead against hers.

A sly smirk danced across Misty's features. "Oh I remember. You told me in a lot of ways." She snickered when his face went red. They were curled up together without a stitch of clothing on, yet he was still so bashful when she was teasing like that. Misty had no idea why he was that way, but it was really endearing and she hoped it never changed.

They laid in silence before Misty twisted around and rolled away. "We really need to get moving. Can you call everyone to meet up with us while I have a shower?"

"Sure. Hey, want me to start looking for places? I can get Clemont to help me later too but doesn't hurt to look early, right?"

"As early as a few hours can be." Misty narrowed her eyes at him. "No Elvis impersonators."

"But I was thinking—"

"No."

"Okay, but hear me out—"

"No!"

Ash sighed and flopped back against the pillows. "I see how it's going to be from now on." Despite his pouty words, he couldn't help but smile broadly at her laughter. All he could feel was excitement rushing through him.

They were getting married.

...

Misty tapped her foot nervously against the floor of the café, glad that they weren't getting that many looks. It was far too early for most people to bother being up, but Kalos was filled with many quaint, small places that were up and running for the early-Fletchling. The sign in front of the door even said so.

She scowled a bit at Ash, who had shoved pretty much an entire croissant into his mouth at once. He just smiled at her with puffy cheeks, and she rolled her eyes at him.

Of course he would be calm. It wasn't like they were facing off against a fake version of Arceus or anything. They were just getting married.

Holy hell she was going to freak.

Ash snorted with amusement as she jumped when the door opened, the bell chiming as Serena and Clemont walked into the place. There was no Bonnie in sight, but that was just as well for right now.

Immediately, Ash jumped up, grabbing the drink that he had bought for his bespectacled friend. He hurried over, mouth still full of food, nodded at Serena, looped his arm around Clemont's shoulder, and immediately dragged him away.

Subtle.

Serena blinked a couple times before turning around and making her way towards Misty. "Why did Ash just kidnap Clemont?"

Straight to the point. Bless and curse Serena.

"He's very eager to get some things done today," Misty explained and nodded to the chair across from her. "Ash ordered that drink for you. I'm not sure if it's right..." She trailed off and shrugged.

Serena slid into the chair and glanced at the cup. She hesitantly took a small sip before nodding her head. "He got it right. That was nice of him. I hope you guys weren't waiting long."

"No. I know I called super early."

The blonde-haired woman frowned and asked, "Are you okay? You seem...off." She took a sip of her drink.

"I'm fine," Misty assured her, knowing that she was feeling a little anxious, but it was for such a good reason. She grabbed her own drink, and Serena immediately choked. Alarmed, the redhead cried out, "Are you alright?"

Serena nodded her head as she finished coughing, waving her hand in front of her face as her eyes watered a little bit. She cleared her throat when the coughing fit stopped before she grabbed Misty's hand. "What? No, not what. I know what. Why? No, never mind, that's stupid. When?" She nodded towards her engagement ring.

Misty's cheeks turned pink as she pulled her hand back, a small smile spreading across her lips. She ran her finger along the smooth surface of the ring. "We're getting married."

"I noticed." Serena's eyes lit up as she leaned forward eagerly. "When did he ask? How did he ask? I didn't even know he was planning on asking! I mean I'm not surprised at all but—"

"No, Serena, you don't get it." Misty shook her head. "We're getting married. Today."

That instantly silenced the other woman, who just stared at her, mouth opening and closing, reminding her a bit of a Goldeen. Serena's eyes lit up as everything clicked. "Oh my Arceus! You're going to elope!"

"Shh," Misty hissed. "We don't want the media to find out." Her serious expression was replaced with a broad smile. "If you're not busy, I'd like you to be there as a witness. Ash is asking Clemont right now and we're going to see if Bonnie can film it for his mom, Dawn and anyone else. And if it's not asking too much maybe you could help me...find a dress." It was strange how shy and embarrassed that she suddenly sounded.

Serena was still visibly stunned before a smile appeared on her face. "Misty, that's...of course I will! Yes to all of it! Oh and we can get Bonnie! She and I can get matching dresses off the racks too! We can even get Ash and Clemont matching ties! I can't believe you're asking me! Well, I mean, we're your only friends here, but still!"

"Honestly, I'm glad it's you here," Misty admitted. "And that sounds like an amazing idea if we can pull it off, but if we can't, don't worry about matching. We have a few hours, not a few months."

Serena snorted in the most unladylike way. "Please. We – especially you – will all look fabulous. Just watch me work." She immediately pulled out her cellphone and started typing furiously. "Where are you guys going anyway? Like, where are you getting married?"

Misty tapped her fingers against the table. "Palace du Cresselia. There's so many nice fountains and it looks beautiful. Ash called this morning and managed to get a spot later tonight. Not under his name though. I think he made one up so no one would know."

"That place *is* beautiful," Serena cooed, knowing that the lights and windows of the building, all in the colours of the Pokémon it was named after, made the place spectacular. "A nice shade of blue would stand out really well there. Oh, we have *so* much to do." She grabbed Misty's hands. "I'll call Bonnie, you finish eating! This is so exciting!"

Misty laughed, glad over her friend's enthusiastic response. If someone told Misty just after she met Serena, that the girl would be acting like this at the prospect of her and Ash getting married, the redhead never would have believed them. Serena was never the one to be too outwardly hostile, but

it was obvious that she was hurt that Ash didn't feel the same way about her.

"Alright," Serena said only a few moments later. "I got a hold of my boss who is willing to go into the boutique early. I promised her a special client that's buying off the rack. The Pokémon Master's future wife, and future Water Pokémon Master, qualifies there. Bonnie will meet us there. Don't worry, we can be discreet!"

"It hasn't even been five minutes."

The blonde winked at her. "Stick with me, and we'll have everything sorted by noon."

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"Ash really asked you?" Bonnie's eyes were wide as she stared at Misty's ring. "That's awesome Misty! I knew he could do it! I mean, I'm going to have to propose to Serena for Clemont, but I always knew Ash could do it!"

"Oh hush," Serena said with a laugh as she nudged Bonnie. "Clemont and I aren't getting married anytime soon."

Bonnie sighed and rolled her eyes before looking at Misty with narrowed eyes. "So, we're getting dresses because you're getting married tonight?"

"Yes."

"Are you pregnant?"

"Bonnie!" Serena smacked her hand.

"What? It's a good reason."

"No," Misty laughed a bit and shook her head. "No, I'm *not* pregnant. I just...we *want* to get married. We want it to happen this way. We're both positive. I—we were wondering if you could record it for us, Bonnie? For Ash's mom and our sisters?"

"Of course I will!" Bonnie clapped her hands together excitedly

There was no one in the boutique, it was so early, but Serena had a key to get them in, and assured them that her boss would be there soon. "The upper levels are all bridal. The middle one is for performers, this one is just dresses in general."

"It's huge," Misty said in awe as she spun around. There were so many things to look at that she didn't even know where to start. Thank Arceus she had Serena with her.

The young woman laughed. "It is. Oh! Madame Bustier!"

Misty looked around to see a woman with short, dark brown hair staring at them. When their eyes met, the woman's eyebrow raised as recognition passed over her face.

"This is my friend—"

"Misty Waterflower, the one who just won the tournament yesterday. It was quite the battle," the woman's silver eyes looked her over. "Though I was under the impression that you were with the Pokémon Mas—oh!" Her eyes lit up and she looked at Serena. "A special client indeed. You're not the first one that's come to me like this, and I am simply flattered."

Misty's cheeks turned pink and she felt pride rush through her, especially since the first thing that the woman noticed her for was the tournament, not *just* being Ash's girlfriend. She was proud of that, but when people *only* saw her as that, it drove her nuts.

"Come along now, dear, we'll find you the perfect dress." Madame Bustier motioned towards the elevator.

Misty followed her, with Serena and Bonnie staying close behind them. The shop owner asked her a couple questions as the elevator went up.

"Tell me, dear, what kind of dress do you have in mind?"

Misty blinked at the woman before looking at Serena. She understood the words, but for some reason, no answer came to mind. She shrugged.

"You must have *some* idea," Bonnie piped up. "Everyone pictures their wedding day, right?"

"Well, not everyone," Serena corrected the younger girl, trying to be fair. "Someone who wanted to marry their long-time boyfriend though..."

The redhead glared at them before saying, "Yeah but this...never mind." It wasn't easy to picture everything that she once had in mind when she pictured a big wedding, because she didn't want it anymore. If she was honest, the thought of getting an actual wedding dress hadn't occurred to her. She was ready to just grab any nice dress at any shop and go.

Thinking back to her childhood dreams, Misty snorted. "Nothing super poofy."

"No ball gowns," Madame Bustier said with a nod of her head. "Perhaps we should start with a mermaid one for a Water Master."

"Sure, we can try there." Misty had worn mermaid dresses before without any problems, though they weren't her favourite. It was better to start somewhere.

Walking into the bridal floor of the boutique made Misty stop. There was so much white everywhere, with the occasional ivory, off-white, cream, and even some light pinks, blues, and purples.

Catching what she was looking at, Serena nudged her. "We have this whole place to ourselves for a couple hours so we can look around at anything for now. Later, Bonnie and I will look for you." Her boss cleared her throat. Clearly she wanted to be directly involved with this. Who could blame her though? It wasn't often someone got to dress up a bride to marry a Pokémon Master. "And Madame Bustier. That way people don't see you. If you want to try one of the coloured ones, you can. They're more and more popular. I even saw a woman get a black one!"

"No, I think I'll go with white." If she was going to get the dress, she might as well go all the way. Excitement rushed through her. "Let's shop!" She was sure it wouldn't take them long to find a dress for her anyway.

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Serena slumped down on a chair, other people mulling around her. The shop was open, and they still hadn't found a dress for Misty. They had even taken a break from that and managed to find dresses for her and Bonnie (which Misty insisted on paying for as a thank you present). Then they went back to work looking for a wedding dress while Misty stayed out of sight.

The blonde didn't want to admit it, but she was getting frustrated, but she also acknowledged that Misty must be even more annoyed at this point.

Her eyes slid over to the dress that was hanging up beside her and bit her lip. It was perfect in her mind: an a-line dress with a sweetheart neckline and plenty of sparkle on it, just like Misty had wistfully described before looking at ones that were a little plainer.

Misty stated that it was too expensive before even looking at it, and Serena understood sticking to a budget. She didn't want to meddle too much, but she was so sure that Misty would absolutely love that one if she'd just give it a shot.

Peeking once again at the door where Bonnie and Madame Bustier were helping her with another dress that Serena just knew she was going to reject, she snuck back around the corner and brought out her cellphone, quickly going through her contacts.

"What's up?" Ash asked without any other proper greeting. He didn't sound stressed out at all, and she was a little bit envious of that.

"So, I have a question," she said. "Misty's having a hard time getting a dress. She even found one she liked for Bonnie and I. I found one that she would adore but she won't even look at it because of the price—"

"Uhh...she...does know that I got a lot of money, right?" he sounded so unsure that it was almost hilarious. Of course the Pokémon Master was paid ridiculously well, not to mention he'd been saving most of it since he didn't really have the urge to spend it on fancy things like mansions and nice cars.

Serena giggled a bit. "She does but I think she's trying to stick with her savings."

"But she has one of my cards she's allowed to use. Just tell her to stop being stubborn and use that." He sounded so exasperated that Serena wished she could see his face. "Seriously. Or she'll just get mad and say no and leave me there and run off with Georgio or something."

She snorted loud enough to get a cross look from a little old lady that was nearby. "When you put it that way. Alright. I'll talk her into it. We'll just keep it under \$5,000."

There was a long pause. "...What kind of dress costs \$5,000?"

"Really nice ones."

"I hope the one you're talking about doesn't cost \$5,000. We *both* know she won't go for it no matter how stubborn you and I are." Serena got the distinct impression that he was actually trying to find a way to word 'she better not spend \$5,000 on one stupid dress' so that he didn't come off as a complete jerk. She had to mentally applaud his moment of tact, especially since she really couldn't blame him. Sometimes she was appalled at the money people spent on things like that.

"It's not but that gives me a great idea! Thanks Ash, bye!"

"Wait-wha—?" Serena hung up on him and grabbed the dress again. She hurried off, going through the store and finding a similar one. A smirk rising on her lips, she hurried back to the changing room.

Misty was standing in front of a mirror with a fairly nice dress on, but from the look on her face, it just wasn't right. Then again, Serena thought it wasn't right either.

"So, I was just talking to Ash," she chirped as she made her way over.

"Why?" Misty asked, a bit of dread passing across her face. Serena could almost see the dread that Ash had changed his mind.

"He agreed that you should just find a dress you want and not worry about the price." Not *exactly* what he said, but Misty didn't need to know that. "So don't look at the price tag, just tell me what you think about this one." She held up the dress that was terribly expensive, but still extremely similar to the one that she really thought the young woman would like.

Misty pursed her lip but didn't protest. Bonnie clapped her hands together again. "That one's beautiful."

"It is," Misty stared at the jewels and the shape of the dress, her voice still sounding hesitant. "I just...it's silly. I was ready to just go in a cheap dress and I guess in my head I still keep thinking that it's only one day."

"It's always only one day, sweetheart," Madame Bustier pointed out to her. "Eloping or not. Perhaps you'll even get to wear it again if you have some little party with your family later on."

She hadn't thought of that. She thought the dress Serena was showing off was beautiful, probably the nicest one she'd seen so far, but she just *knew* it was probably disgustingly expensive and couldn't get beyond that. "Show me how much it is."

Serena huffed and showed her the tag. Misty dropped it, like it had burned her hand, and Bonnie whistled. "Wow."

"No," the redhead added sternly.

"Fine, fine. What about *this* one. It's less than half the price of that one." Serena showed her the original dress. "Just try it on, at least."

That seemed to catch Misty's attention as she looked at it. "Okay."

"I'll help!" Bonnie said happily, as they moved back into the changing room.

Madame Bustier looked at Serena with a raised eyebrow. "Did you purposely bring a more expensive one so she'd try on that one?"

"Maybe." She was entirely unapologetic.

The woman laughed a bit. "Maybe we should move you to the bridal department for a while.

Serena flushed at the praise. She was just an intern while she took a few courses, and worked with the Performance outfits. Being a Kalos Queen gave her that opportunity, since she didn't pursue entertainment like Aria, or management like Shauna.

"Look at this one!" Bonnie cried out happily as she came out. Serena and Madame Bustier look around at Misty, who was looking at the dress in the mirrors. The dress seemed to shimmer and shine in all the right ways, and it fit her perfectly.

"It looks beautiful on you, Misty," Serena cooed, feeling quite proud of herself. "What do you think?" Misty didn't look up at her. "Misty?"

"Are you crying?" Bonnie asked her as she leaned forward a bit, frowning as she did.

"No," Misty said quickly and wiped her eyes unconvincingly.

"I'm sorry!" Serena burst out, horror blooming through her chest. "I didn't think it'd be that bad!"

Misty looked at her like she was insane, and Madame Bustier laughed, placing an arm around Serena's shoulders. "That's the reaction you want."

"It is?"

"It is," Misty agreed as she stared at the mirror. "It really is." The white, mermaid dress had rhinestones twisting down it in almost wave-like patterns and fit her perfectly. It was absolutely everything that she could ever want but nothing she thought that she could have on such a short notice and was quite willing to go without. "It's still out of *my* budget though."

"Ash said get what you want," Serena argued, taking a step towards her. "That's what you want. Get it."

"But...that's *his* money."

"Yeah," Bonnie agreed, "but tomorrow, when you wake up, everything that belongs to him is yours and vice versa."

"I...that's true." Misty smiled at herself. "And tomorrow, I'll be a Master too."

"A wife and a Master in 24 hours," Bonnie smiled. "You know how to get things done."

"Gonna add mother on to that too?" Serena joked.

Misty made a face. "Mew no."

Everyone else that was with her laughed and she looked at herself in the mirror, running her hands along the soft fabric of the dress again, pausing briefly over her stomach. She couldn't imagine it being round, but the thought wasn't embarrassing. They *had* talked about it before, and they were getting married in a few hours. It was something they both wanted, so it was going to happen, just not *now*.

That was one thing that could wait for a few years.

...

Misty didn't want flowers, much to Serena's horror. She didn't want manicures or anyone else to do her hair. Instead, she let Serena twist her hair up to the base of her neck, using a hair piece that they picked up at the bridal shop. It was the only flower that she wanted on her, a single calla lily. In a way, it was like having a little piece of her long deceased mother, Calla Waterflower, with her on that day.

Misty paused, her hand hovering with the tube of mascara in front of her eye. What would her parents be thinking? She wanted to believe that they would have been thrilled that she was happy. Her mother wrote so eloquently in her journals about love and Misty used it almost like a Bible before they were destroyed in the flood waters that ruined most of Cerulean City.

Nodding to herself, Misty decided, her mother would be thrilled for her. She was fairly confident about that. Maybe her father would have been iffy about the whole thing but no doubt her mother would have set him straight.

She kept getting ready, and then Serena and Bonnie helped her into her dress. Misty looked at herself in a long mirror, taking a deep breath. She was getting married. It was real.

"Ready?" Bonnie asked as she popped back into the room. They were already at the hall where the ceremony would take place, and were given a room to get ready in. This was fortunate, since it meant Serena could run around and make sure Ash and Clemont were ready too.

Misty turned to look at Bonnie, smiling at the cerulean blue dress that she wore. It was simple, but beautiful on the teenage girl. Serena's was *slightly* different being strapless where Bonnie's had thin straps, but that didn't matter to Misty. When she pictured this the night before, she saw them as completely mismatched.

Bless Serena's heart. She was the best Maid of Honor Misty could have asked for, which was another good reason to get married there and not at home, where it would have been months of this type of planning.

"Yes," Misty finally answered Bonnie's question. "And don't you look beautiful."

Bonnie laughed cheerfully, already holding up her camera and recording. "It's nothing compared to you." Her eyes went wide. "I can't wait to get Ash's reaction on camera it's going to be hilarious. He's already about to faint at this point."

Misty snorted, unable to keep herself from smiling. "Is he really?"

"Well he's fidgety and my brother had to assure him that you're not going to run off so yes." Bonnie looked behind her and said, "Oh! I forgot! We found a way to hold the back of your dress going down the aisle."

"My dress isn't that long, but I admit, I'm curious."

"You guys can come in!" Bonnie called over her shoulder, and Misty blinked when three Pokémon walked through the door.

The redhead laughed as Marill bounced over, followed by an excited Ria, and a slow-walking Pikachu. Pikachu was holding a pillow that had clearly been picked up at some furniture store very hastily, along with the two, very cheap looking, rings.

"Of course Ash went to get you," Misty cooed as she brushed her fingers through Marill's fur, doing the same to Ria and Pikachu. "It wouldn't be the same otherwise."

"Ash is really nervous," Ria told her, using her telepathy. It was clear just how amusing she found that.

She laughed loudly. "Okay, let's go put him out of his misery."

...

Though the outside of the building was absolutely breathtaking, the inside was rather simple. That made sense though, since it wasn't created to hold big weddings, just small, intimate gatherings like theirs.

It was quiet, much more than Misty expected, but her stomach still fluttered with excitement as she held Ash's hand and listened to the man officiating the wedding talk about Arceus watching down on them or something like that. She wasn't paying attention to him all that much because Arceus better have been sending a few good vibes their way, all things considered.

Instead she stared at Ash who seemed just as excited. Perhaps to an onlooker who didn't know him, he might have seemed fidgety and nervous, but to her, he looked ready to break into a massive, child-like grin and bounce on the spot.

"Now the vows. I understand you came up with some on your own," the elderly man said to them kindly. He had been shocked to see who he was *actually* marrying on that night, but wouldn't tell a soul.

Misty looked at Ash expectantly. He suddenly looked rather shy, despite how grown-up and handsome he looked in his suit with a tie (that was kind of lopsided, and she was *sure* Serena was mentally seething about it) that matched the blue everyone else was wearing.

"Okay. I got this. Right. Misty, when I first met you, I thought Arceus sent you because I would have died if you weren't there." Serena cooed sweetly at his words. "Then you slapped me and yelled and me and I destroyed your bike and you stalked me while yelling some more."

Everyone stared at him as if he was completely insane, and Pikachu face-palmed. Ria snorted. Marill just sighed.

"You were infuriating, annoying, and ridiculous. I thought you were insane." Misty glared at him and he quickly added, "And in all of that, you still became my best friend." He had the decency to look embarrassed at least. "It has never been easy, but I wouldn't change any of it, because you're really my favourite person in the world. I...I don't know how you put up with all the trouble that comes with me, but I'm glad you do. I don't want to think of a world without you in it."

Bonnie sighed a bit behind the camera and Clemont was suddenly blinking a lot.

"What do normal vows say anyway? Something about being there during sickness, health, good, bad, and that kind of thing? Well, you get awfully pouty when you're sick, but it doesn't matter. I want to be there with you every step of the way. I...well...I'm really bad at this you shouldn't have told me to make something up on my own."

Serena shook her head while dabbing at the corner of her eye.

"I guess...no, I know, I wouldn't change anything about you, and I want to be with you through everything good and bad in the future. I...we both know I'm going to mess up sometimes, but I'm going to try as hard as I can. We're partners, right? We make each other better. So I promise to try and be the best husband I can be through everything that comes our way." He quickly glanced at the officiator, indicating he was done.

Misty let out a watery bark of a laugh and the vows she had been thinking of went out the window. "Oh my Arceus, you are an idiot." She giggled and shook her head. "You used to make me so mad, and you know, sometimes you still do. But from the moment you caught Caterpie, I knew there was something special about you. Something good. I know the good parts and the bad parts of you, and I wouldn't change anything either. You're right, we do make each other better. I don't think I'd be who I am if I had never met you." She took a deep breath. "I followed you to the end of the world and back, and I would do it again without hesitation." His grip on her hands tightened and she wondered if he was picturing the moment they both thought that she was going to die in his arms. "So, I promise to be there for every moment in the future, good and bad, no matter what might come." She laughed, her eyes watery and her voice choked. "I'm really glad you destroyed my bike."

Bonnie giggled, Clemont muttered something about his glasses being foggy, and Serena unashamedly wiped away her tears. Ash tugged Misty into a tight hug, which was not at all part of

a proper ceremony. It didn't matter though. Nothing else did.

Chapter End Notes

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Part Three

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Breath in. Hold it in. Breath out. Repeat. Don't hesitate. Don't be afraid.

That was the mental mantra of Misty Ketchum as she stood just inside the entrance of the battle arena. It was the same locker room as the other day, but it seemed oddly small, like the walls were closing in on her.

She moved from foot to foot in her yellow sandals, tying and untying the corner of her blue and yellow tank top over and over again. As she reached up to run her fingers through her hair, she stopped and stared at the rings on her finger. One a twisting band of diamonds that looked almost wave-like, leading to one central diamond, the other a rather cheap-looking placeholder.

A smile spread across her lips as she ran her thumb over the rings. She would certainly be disappointed if she lost today, but it wouldn't be the end of the world. There was next year too, and she was coming home a victor no matter what way anyone looked at it.

The Butterfree that threatened to break out of her belly faded away, morphing into confidence and energy. She set her face into a determined glare. She could do this. The only thing in her way was Master Siebold, and it would take more than him to take her down.

She could hear cheers erupt as Master Siebold was introduced first. She steeled herself as the door opened, and she steadily walked out into the light.

"And introducing your challenger, all the way from Cerulean City in Kanto, Misty Waterflower!"

Misty internally scowled a bit because that wasn't right at all. She lived in Pallet Town now, and her name was Misty Ketchum. They were planning on keeping that to themselves until they got to talk to their families though, so she'd let it slide this time.

Instead, she smiled brightly to the crowd and waved. Her eyes sought out Serena, Bonnie, and Clemont, since she knew that they'd be in the stands where she could see them and not the private box up above. She found them right in the front row, and blinked with surprise at what she saw.

That was certainly unexpected.

...

"I am so excited! Are you excited?" Bonnie asked, literally jumping up and down. "This is going to be amazing!" She had no intention of putting on the rain poncho in front of her, even though they were right in the front and center of the 'splash zone'.

"Excuse me," they heard someone from beside them mutter, and the sound of a child squeaking reached their ears. All three Kalos natives looked around, gaping at who they saw coming towards them.

"Ash!" Serena cried out, realizing that people around them were staring. "What are you doing here? I thought you would be up in the private box."

"Thought about it," he admitted as he sat in the empty seat beside Bonnie, ignoring the stares at he

was getting. Pikachu shifted from his shoulder onto the back of Bonnie's chair, greeting Dedenne happily. "Decided to come with you guys instead. Everyone knows I'm biased about how this turns out anyway, so I figured, might as well cheer with my friends. That, and I wanted her to see me cheering her on." He glanced at the small child that was sitting on his other side, staring at him with wide eyes. "Hi there." The little boy squawked, cheeks turning red.

"You should have worn gloves if you didn't want people to know about that yet," Serena murmured quietly, nodding towards the ring on his hand.

Ash snorted and shrugged. "Who's going to notice that over an awesome battle."

"Don't say I didn't warn you," Serena said, turning her attention back towards the arena.

...

"This is a six-on-six match with the use of water Pokémon only," the referee called out. "The last Pokémon standing wins the match. Are both trainers ready?" He looked at Siebold first, who nodded, and then at Misty, who nodded while taking a deep breath. "Trainers, choose your first Pokémon!"

Misty watched as Siebold threw his Pokémon into the air in an elegant arc, the ball twisting around before unleashing his Clawitzer in a shower of light and sparkles. Misty pursed her lips, throwing her own Pokéball into the air.

"This battle is Clawitzer versus Corsola! The Pokémon that faints last wins this round!" The referee called out. "Let the match begin!"

...

The splash-zone, Clemont decided, was a highly accurate description of the place that they were sitting. He was very thankful that he had water-repellant glasses, or he wouldn't be able to see anything.

To say the battle was intense was putting it mildly. The clock above the arena indicated that the battle had been going on for over an hour so far.

He glanced to his left and watched Serena for a moment. Her hair was long enough to be pulled back into a short ponytail, but the strands that framed her face were sticking to her skin since they were wet. He doubted she was entirely pleased that her pink vest and skirt were so wet, but she wasn't focused on that. Instead, her cerulean eyes darted back and forth between Barbaracle and Milotic as they fought.

Looking to his right, he watched Bonnie practically vibrate on the spot with excitement, fists clenched in front of her, her stare unwavering. She didn't even acknowledge the water dripping off of her. Dedenne, on the other hand, looked far from impressed. Pikachu was patting her back, not at all bothered by the water.

Ash had his hands on his wet jeans, leaning forward with narrowed brown eyes that were solely focused on the battle. Though not there in an official capacity, Clemont got the distinct feeling that Ash was analyzing the battle carefully. Sometimes he would wince before Misty's Pokémon took a bad hit. Since he had an outsider's point of view, he could see the small goofs that Misty made every once and a while. Clemont noticed them on occasion too, but not nearly as well as Ash did. He had the additional advantage of being able to take a peek at the emotions of the people and Pokémon battling, and could probably feel the excitement coming on when one of the trainers

realized they had an opening to attack.

Clemont was impressed by the fact that Ash wasn't being super vocal. It was obvious that he wanted to yell out some advice from time to time, but given who he was, it would probably be considered cheating by anyone else rather than just being a supportive boyfriend—husband. Clemont blinked slightly at that thought. That was going to take a while to get used to.

Just because Ash had to watch what he yelled and did, didn't mean that Clemont had to.

So he cheered twice as loud, and yelled whenever he could, Serena and Bonnie following suit. There was no way they could help her, but they could be supportive.

...

Serena screamed, covering her face as steam and water shot in all directions. She carefully peered up after a moment, but couldn't see anything. It was a bit unnerving really, since two warring Gyarados couldn't exactly disappear into thin air.

Ash suddenly stood up, startling all of them. A massive grin appeared on his face, and he suddenly seemed like he was just itching to jump over the short barrier separating them from the arena. Pikachu was right beside him, sitting on the railing and positively vibrating.

Something about his smile instantly told Serena what had happened, and her smile started to grow as she giggled. It didn't matter if she was a wet mess at the moment.

Clemont and Bonnie seemed to catch on too, both grinning broadly and Bonnie trying to hold back an excited scream.

Fans were turned on, clearing the lingering steam away. One Gyarados was slumped over the edge of the pool, the other just managing to stay up-right, but still swaying.

"Master Siebold's Gyarados is unable to battle! Misty's Gyarados has won the battle! The match goes to Misty Waterflower!"

...

"The match goes to Misty Waterflower!"

The young woman in question stared with wide eyes, not truly comprehending what she was hearing. It sounded like the referee had just announced that she had won, but surely that couldn't be true? She had spent the last couple years studying, doing the proper tests, examinations, and meeting all the prerequisites to become a Water Pokémon Master, and only needed to beat a Water Master in battle, but surely after such hard work, it wasn't over yet?

Gyarados twisted around to look at her, triumph in her eyes. A broken sob escaped her lips as she slowly, almost numbly walked towards the edge of the pool, reaching out towards Gyarados, who leaned his entire head against her body, clearly exhausted.

"We did it," she breathed out, the words sounding faint in her mind. "We did it."

That's when it hit her, and all feeling and sound rushed back like a crashing wave. The cheering roars were almost overwhelming as she hugged her Pokémon tightly, the pounding of her heart almost overtaking the sound from the crowd. "We did it!"

Gyarados grumbled in agreement and pride as Misty nuzzled her face into his rough scales.

Opening her eyes again, she caught sight of the light glimmering off of her ring, and giggled wildly. She looked around at the crowd, waving at them with a wide smile. Her green eyes darted to where Ash and their friends had been sitting, only to see them gone.

Movement caught her eye, and she looked back to the door of the locker room opening, Ash leading the way out there. All four of them were as soaked as she was, but it didn't matter.

She put Gyarados in her Pokéball and ran over to them, slipping a little bit. She hit Clemont first, throwing her arms around him and squeezing him tightly as he let out an embarrassed, rather shy laugh. Quickly, her attention went to Serena and Bonnie, and she charged at them, throwing an arm around each girl so that they were in a warm, three-way hug. All three laughed and started jumping up and down together on the spot.

"Pikachu pi ka chu pika!" Pikachu spoke up, jumping up onto Serena's head.

"Denne den," Dedenne agreed, climbing up onto Bonnie's head. Misty had no idea what that meant, but she still smiled at the two and then turned to the last of the group.

With a laugh louder than the rest, she jumped at Ash, hugging him tightly and burying her face in the crook of his neck as he caught and held her weight briefly before setting her down again, engulfing her in a tight hug.

"I did it," she choked out, blinking away the tears that threatened to overwhelm her. "I did it!"

"I knew you could," he replied, before taking a step away from her so that he could see her face. He smiled and nodded his head back towards the arena.

Misty followed his face, turning to a clapping Siebold, the barest traces of a smile on his face. Ash slid his hand to her back and gently shoved her forward. "Go on. Being a good winner's important."

She sent one last affectionate look his way before walking back towards the half way point around the pool. Siebold met her halfway, shaking her hand firmly.

"Congratulations, Miss Water..." He trailed off, looking at her hand. His eyebrow quirked a bit. "Well, that's not right, is it? Should I be congratulating a Mrs. Ketchum instead?"

"You should," she agreed with a laugh. "Thank you! Thank you so much! That battle was amazing!"

"It was. I am highly impressed with your skills. The Master wasn't wrong when he insisted you didn't need any special treatment and could win on your own." Misty gaped at him, the realization of what he was implying hitting her head. "Now, let's let everyone get freshened up, and you will be escorted to the Hall of Fame. Before that though, you should wave to your fans again. You are a Master now, after all."

Misty nodded her head and looked back to the ground, waving at them and smiling widely.

She felt like she was on top of the world.

...

The Hall of Fame wasn't something that someone showed up to unexpected, dripping wet with messy hair and clothes. The people allowed in were few and far in between. That was why Serena, Clemont, and Bonnie couldn't accompany them into the chamber after they had all gotten cleaned up. Even Pikachu had to stay behind.

Ash was beside her though. Spouses (because holy crap he was her spouse now) usually weren't allowed in, but the Pokémon Master was. Sure, he wasn't there in any official capacity, but there was really no way to keep him out of the room, and Misty was glad for his presence. She was still so excited and jittery that she could barely stand in one spot. Instead, she fiddled with the cheap ring on Ash's left hand.

"Why'd we get these anyway?" she asked him, speaking in a hushed tone as if she would be carted away for breaking the silence. "We're just going to get nicer ones, and we didn't really want anyone else to pick up on this yet. Not the media yet, at least."

"No, but it still seemed right, you know?" he said, shrugging a bit. He looked over her shoulder as footsteps came towards them, nodding his head as Misty turned to look. "Diantha. Siebold."

"Well, that was certainly a spectacular battle, wasn't it?" Diantha asked as she smiled at them. "Though it seems that there was another, just as exciting, previous engagement, wasn't there?"

Misty grinned, her cheeks turning pink as she nodded her head. The champion laughed a bit, and approached the doors.

The Hall of Fame was beautiful. There were trophies, medals, and pictures everywhere. In the center of the room was a tall computer that seemed almost too ugly to be there, but it was still necessary.

"Let's see, I am a witness, and Master Siebold is a witness. With all due respect, Master Ketchum, but I think you're slightly too biased to be added as an official witness." Diantha cast her amused blue eyes at him.

"A bit," Ash agreed, letting go of Misty's hand and putting both of his on her shoulders from behind. "I'm just the moral support."

"Indeed. Hmm...what name shall we put in here?"

"I believe she said it was Misty Ketchum," Siebold spoke up.

"From water Pokémon trainer Misty Waterflower to Water Pokémon Master Misty Ketchum," Diantha noted.

"Water Pokémon Master Misty Ketchum," the redhead repeated. It was long, but she liked the way it sounded. It made a broad smile spread across her lips, and she almost bounced on the spot.

Yesterday when she woke up, she was, as Diantha said, she was simply a trainer of water Pokémon, Misty Waterflower. She couldn't even add Gym Leader onto that anymore since she hadn't been the official Cerulean City Gym Leader in years. Now though, she was Water Pokémon Master Misty Ketchum.

She felt like nothing in the world could bring her down, not even if it tried.

...

The phone startled Ash awake, and Misty groaned at it. "Throw it across the room. I wanna sleep."

He had already grabbed it, glancing at the screen as it rang. He stared at the picture oddly, deciding to accept it, because Serena of all people wouldn't just bother them so early in the morning for no reason at all. "Hel—"

"None of us told them, I swear!"

Ash pulled the phone away from his ear and stared down at it again as if the young woman on the other end was insane. He brought the phone back to his ear and asked, "What?"

"One gossip blog published it and now it's everywhere. I told you this would happen if you didn't wear your gloves."

"Wear my—oh." He sat up, eyes going wide. "Which one?"

"Look for the Lumiose Light. It's the one that started with this."

"Get your tablet," Ash told Misty, keeping his voice low. "Check the Lumiose Light blog."

Misty peered up at him with confusion and annoyance. "Okay?" She rolled over, grabbing the object in question. It took her two tries to get her password right, and a minute to find the right app because she was tired. That tiredness instantly vanished when she saw the first post on there, her face going pale. "Oh no."

"Thanks for telling us, Serena," Ash said quickly before hanging up the phone, not even waiting for her to reply. He just stared at the gossip article, talking about his and Misty's secret wedding (it was all just theoretical at this point). There were images from Misty's last battle prior to the one with Master Siebold, zoomed in on both of their hands and noting the distinct lack of rings, then ones during her match with them. "I'm sorry, Mist. They might not have noticed so quickly if I just wore gloves like Serena told me too."

Misty just stared at the pictures, making Ash a little nervous with her silence. He jolted a bit when he realized that a smile was starting to overtake her features. "Damn, I look good."

Okay, he wasn't expecting *that* at all, but he'd roll with it.

"Look at me!" She pointed at a picture of herself mid-battle, completely drenched and looking absolutely vicious. "I mean...now I understand you. I'd always want to do me too if it was an option." He snorted with amusement. "What? Look at me! How are you not all over me right now?" She moved to another picture that focused on Ash's ring when he was hugging her after she won. Then there was one of them smiling together. "Hot-damn, look at both of us."

"They're saying you're pregnant, and that's why we got married," he pointed out reluctantly. He didn't want to burst her bubble because not even this could bring her down from her victory high, which was absolutely amazing.

"They'll probably say that a lot now," she shrugged, and he knew she was probably right. "But damn when the time comes, our babies will be beautiful."

A part of Misty knew that she sounded egotistical and ridiculous, but she honestly didn't care. She felt like she was on top of the world. Screw the people who said that she had to pick professional or personal goals and never both. She came to Kalos as Miss Misty Waterflower, and she was leaving as Master Misty Ketchum. It had a fantastic ring to it. She had unlimited doors before her to do whatever she wanted to do with herself.

Right now though, she just wanted to run off to some secluded part of the world with her husband. The thought made her stomach grow warm. He was her husband now and she was his wife. She didn't want to share that with the rest of the world yet. She didn't want paparazzi around. She didn't want friends or family around. She didn't even want the Pokémon around. Just him and her and no one to bother them.

"Alright," he agreed when she proposed the idea. "We'll go to somewhere tropical and secluded because you both know how much you love the ocean. We can go anywhere you want."

"Good."

"Somewhere where we can hide from my mom for a while. Though maybe she hasn't seen this yet. No reason she'd check out a gossip blog from another region!"

Misty paused, her mouth falling open slightly. "My sisters read the Lumiose Light."

"Well, we're doomed. They will definitely tell my mom. Who will tell Dawn. Who will destroy us both."

"Better have the most epic honeymoon ever then if we're going to die when we get back home."

Ash stared at her seriously. "Hey, Mist? No regrets?"

She snorted at him. "Of course not! Why would I regret anything?" Her expression softened.

"Seriously, the only thing I really feel right now is happy. Excited maybe. All good things. We can deal with this," she motioned to the blog, "later."

He smiled at her and nodded his head. "You're right."

"Of course I am! I'm your wife, I'm always right."

"I don't think that's how it works."

"It definitely does. It was on the papers you signed," she said happily, flopping back down and dragging him with her. "Now, more cuddles and sleep, less worrying. We have all the time in the world for that."

Ash nodded again, resting beside her again. "Love you, Mist."

"I love you too."

Misty stayed awake longer than Ash, but true to her earlier words, it wasn't any form of regret or nervousness that kept her conscious. It was excitement running through her. Everything was going to change, and she couldn't wait to face it head-on.

-The End-



Chapter End Notes

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